

## **THE SIDAMA POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE DENIED THEIR RIGHTS OF FAMILY VISITS, KEPT HANDCUFFED AND THEIR LEGS WIRED; and THEIR WIVES HAVE BEEN RAPED, SIDAMA, ETHIOPIA**

October 21, 2003

The Sidama political prisoners are kept handcuffed and their legs wired on a permanent basis since being made to leave Awassa on the second week of September 2003 according to the eye witnesses from Wolaita Sodo. They were uprooted from their land to Desalegn H/Msariam's (southern regional state president's) capital city 'Wolaita Sodo' by the order of Meles Zenawi. They are said to have been out of the reach of the international community and their families. The wives of the two prisoners who went to Wolaita Sodo to visit their beloved ones were put in prison for more than 72 hours where they have been raped by the security forces of TPLF/EPRDF. Both women were eventually being released with intimidating gestures of warning not to go back to visit their husbands and keep silent.

Two battalions of army and police most of whom are Wolaitas and Tigreans ordered by Meles Zenawi and regional president mentioned above are said to have been patrolling and strictly controlling any movement around and in the prison including the family visits. It's not clear what's happening to the prisoners apart from their being handcuffed and legs wired according to one of the security squads who is not happy to see the cruel act of TPLF's regime, but working for the sake of bread and survival. International Red Cross and other human rights organizations haven't visited the prisoners as recently as yesterday.

Lamentation Continues for International help.

As we have tried to increase the awareness of the international community on the issue of the Sidama political prisoners and the nation's relentless human rights violations by the Abyssinian colonization successor TPLF/EPRDF led tyrant regime, the suffering has still continued. The transfer of the Sidama political prisoners from their city to another nation's capital is, therefore, a part of their strategic colonization of the Sidama people and it's a way designed to devastate the Sidama nationalism and national interest.

Why we, 'the Sidamas and other subjugated nations of Ethiopia', are always shouting?

Unless one baby is discomforted or needs some help, he/she doesn't cry. He or she enjoys his/her comfort. This philosophy is the true reality of humanity's Political, Economical and Socio-Cultural life. No one would shout for help unless there was a problem beyond his/her scope. It's evident that we are not talking based on false allegation, neither it's denigration. Rather, we are revealing a fact that is incontestable and inescapable. It's about the whole concept of democracy, justice, freedom and independence. It's a matter of international human rights and its implementation issues. It's about whether global community is keeping silent deliberately or, their silence is due to ignorance in the light of human rights abuses and indiscriminate imprisonment of the Sidamas and other subjugated nations under Abyssinian Empire by the current regime. It's a matter of morality. It's a matter of valuing international human rights.

Therefore, we the Sidamas and other entirely oppressed nations of the Empire have to keep increasing the awareness of the international community on the fact that the Sidama prisoners are taken away from their land to be harshly tortured. All Sidamas apart from those who are puppets of the regime are kept under house arrest. No one in this region today will truly tell his/her mind because of intimidation and harassment. In general the people are at the state of not trusting their own shadows due to frustration and day-to-day intimidation by the political cadres in addition to the crippling ultra poverty and deprivation caused by the rulers' corruption and plunder of available resources.

We really don't know whether non Abyssinian people in Ethiopia such as the Sidamas are created to undergo all these sufferings. The west, in particular the US is supporting the underground human rights abuses of the regime despite our continued campaign under the pretext of contemporary slogan 'war on terrorism on a global scale' which favors Meles Zenawi and his political cadres. The people who speak out their minds are labeled as terrorist and kept under house arrest, imprisoned or killed by secretive security forces prepared for these special purposes. In effect, the people of subjugated nations are made to lead such a devastating live in all spheres. Hunger, severe starvation and prolonged malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and other easily preventable diseases, and above all indiscriminate human rights violations has put the lives of nations under Abyssinian Empire under hitherto unknown sufferings.

Astonishingly, the regime pretends to be democratic and convinces the west to accept their way of democratic system establishment. Their prominence at a global level has enormously increased in the light of this evidences. And, they are receiving rewarding aid packages from international and regional communities. In practice this inhuman and cruel regime doesn't care for human rights issues apart from talking overtly. This is the way in which the regime deceives and maneuvers the international community. But their hidden agenda is, of running their hideous cruelty and human rights violation at the expense of subjugated nations such as the Sidamas human rights abuses and repression. No one in the mentioned regions think of development apart from day-to-day intimidation speculating an inevitable reality of indiscriminate arrest and killings by the fabricated allegation of the security forces and cadres. That is why the Sidama, Oromo and Ogaden people are paying a precious life sacrifice although yet their voices are not appropriately being heard.

We continue crying and struggling day and night until the voices of the Sidama and other denigrated nations are being heard. These people have no real representation at all levels. Those who are symbolically made to be kept at the parliament and on authority at regional and Zonal levels are those of TPLF/EPRDF's regime puppet if one thinks that they are genuine representatives of the said nations. Their symbolism is just to deceive international community and to pretend to be a democratic country.

We, the Sidamas within the country despite continued intimidation and imprisonment, and in Diaspora have been shouting for the help of the international community relentlessly. Particularly, since the May 24, 2002 massacre of the innocent and peaceful Sidama demonstrators who were claiming their international human rights, our tone of lamentation was remarkably increased. Those demonstrators were unarmed, but, the security forces of the TPLF/EPRDF's regime slaughtered them in daylight in their land helplessly and mercilessly.

The Sidamas since then were emphatically objecting the shift of the administrative status of their capital city 'Awassa' to the federal government. The moral repugnance felt by many of the Sidamas at the brutal massacre of May 24, 2002 innocent and unarmed Sidama people have caused additional inexcusable resentfulness towards their inhuman political system. In addition, they are constantly asking for the release of imprisoned innocent Sidamas in allegation, most of whom were taken to Wolaita Sodo and others kept in Awassa. The appeal to the international and regional community on this issue has been enormous. No one claimed responsibility for all these evil deeds. Instead their capital city's administrative status for which the Sidama people have paid precious life sacrifice and still the prisoners are suffering for is being handed over to the federal regime and the plunder of their resources has continued as usual whereas tens of thousands of Sidama people are undergoing a devastating ordeal.

On these issues, apart from asking for verification from the killer regime itself, international community has done nothing to date. Those who are assigned by the TPLF/EPRDF's Prime Minister to lead an independent investigation into the May 24, 2002 massacre of the Sidama people are those who ordered the massacre. One of them is Desalagn H/Mariam who organized a 'barbed wired camp' to further torture the Sidama political prisoners in his own capital city uprooting them from their land.

Thus, we, the Sidamas are obliged to keep shouting for the help of the international community to help us in the process of returning the Sidama political prisoners back to their land for alleged trial. These hideous acts of the TPLF/EPRDF's dictators against the Sidama people's human rights are against international law. Therefore, the international community should see into the practicality of the return of the Sidama prisoners and need to exert its diplomatic pressure on the regime. We the Sidamas and other subjugated nations who are sharing the same tyranny under cruel Abyssinian Empire keep shouting until our voices are being heard.

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